

History and Significant Facts

The Native Americans who originally inhabited Harpswell were part of the Abenaki. The Abenaki name for Harpswell Neck, then called West Harpswell, was Merriconeag or "quick carrying place", a reference to the narrow peninsula's easy portage. The Abenaki name for Great Island was Erascohegan or Sebascodeggin, which became by the late 1800s Sebascodegan Island. About 1869 Major Nicholas Shapleigh of Eliot bought Merriconeag and Sebascodegan Island from the Abenaki, but because of Indian attacks attempts to settle the area were abandoned until after Dummer's War. The Treaty of 1725 brought a truce and by 1731 many settlers had returned.

In 1758 the town was incorporated by the Massachusetts General Court and named for Harpswell in Lincolnshire, England. Industries included farming and some shipbuilding, but fishing brought considerable profit.

Due to its rich history, Harpswell is home to many historic villages and archaeological sites of which 16 are shipwrecks. There are 165 known prehistoric archaeological areas. The Bailey Island Bridge is a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

Because of its scenic beauty, Harpswell is today a favorite with artists and tourists.

Geography

The town is situated on Casco Bay in the Gulf of Maine, part of the Atlantic Ocean and is 18 miles NE of Portland, Maine and just south of Brunswick, Maine. Harpswell has over 150 miles of coast, more than any other town in Maine.

The town is crossed by state routes 24 and 123. It borders the town of Brunswick to the north, and is separated by the New Meadows River from West Bath to the northeast, and Phippsburg to the east.

Significant Facts About Harpswell (2010)

Estimated Population: 4,740

Size: 59.8 square miles (of which 71% is water)

Median Household Income: \$62,745

Number of Companies: 808

Labor force: 2,535

Median Age: 52.9

Education: High School Graduates 98.1%

2010 Median Home Sales Price: ~\$394,000

Government Offices: 263 Mountain Rd, Harpswell, Maine 04079

School District: MSAD #75

County: Cumberland

Public Water & Sewer: No

Full value tax rate (2003): 5.76

Transportation Info: The town is crossed by state routes 24 and 123. It borders the town of Brunswick to the north, which is directly linked to Route 1 and 295. The Portland International Airport is nearby.

Industry/Business Climate: Harpswell boasts several historic village areas that are perfect for small businesses as well as the arts. There are several community oriented stores that are owned and operated by local families. The community is rich in fishing heritage and preserves that culture to this day. There are several boat builders as well as marinas located throughout town. The Harpswell Business Association is well positioned for growth and assists the businesses within the community.

Education/Training Opportunities: There are two elementary schools in Harpswell. The local middle and high schools are within Mt. Ararat High School and it is located in Topsham, Maine. Colleges and universities that can be attended from Harpswell include the Bowdoin College, University of Southern Maine, University of Maine at Augusta, Saint Joseph's College, University of Maine at Farmington and Southern Maine Community College.